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CCMR CT Program Fosters Regional Cooperation

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Article by Kate Lamar



What can governments do to defeat terrorism without sacrificing the values that bind their societies together? How should governments manage the consequences of attacks that cannot be prevented? How should governments mix civilian and military tools to form effective strategies against terrorism?

These are some of the questions retired Navy Capt. Paul Shemella and his team of instructors in the Center for Civil-Military Relations (CCMR) Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) tackle in the seminars and workshops they conduct world-wide on combating terrorism strategy development. Shemella, the CTFP program manager and a former Navy SEAL, has headed up the program since its inception at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in 2002.

"It is very satisfying to lay the initial groundwork for a long-term program and to watch it grow," said Shemella. "We got off to a fast start and recruited a really top-notch teaching network. We started developing content and delivering seminars in all regions of the world."

"We select our faculty for each seminar to match the audience we are reaching, and that is a civil-military faculty for a civil-military audience," said Shemella. "There is a misperception that the military is one of the first tools that governments reach for in counter terrorism, but that is not actually the way to win a campaign."

"Fighting terrorism is not primarily a military function," Shemella continued. "It involves virtually the whole government, and depending on how the country views terrorism, the government will involve a variety of agencies to help mitigate the threat. The military may have a large role or it may have no role. We engage with our audiences based on what they have to do within their own national context and how they

assign roles and missions to their institutions."

The CTFP, just one program that falls under the larger umbrella of combating terrorism programs initiated by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), focuses on national organization and supranational lanes of responsibility in thinking about combating terrorism strategies, said Matthew King, the Assistant Program Manager for the CTFP program.

"Counterterrorism has to be done in concert with allies on a regional basis," King said. "At CTFP, we strive to bring together officials from five, six, seven different countries within a region for our seminars. It is really eye opening for people to see what the issues are across the border from them or even two countries away."

"I was at one seminar in Nigeria that was specifically dealing with transnational threats. We were running a table-top group exercise that was designed to work through how to implement strategies," said King. "It was fascinating to watch this very diverse group of people hammer out issues that they had never sat down and discussed before. It was incredibly rewarding to facilitate that discussion and see the progress being made."

"In countries where civilian rule is new and where there has been a history of military dictatorships, it's profound to have civilian and military officials sitting down to develop strategy in unison," said King. "It's really inspiring to see this and it leaves me very optimistic about what we can accomplish."

"We have seen over time that the quality of our participants has gone up," said Shemella. "That's not a reflection of our effectiveness alone, that's a reflection of the aggregate of U.S. programs under the fellowship umbrella."

The CCMR CTFP has worked with officials from 135 countries, putting 5,400 civilian and military officials through their programs in the last eight years. They conduct an average of twenty-five programs a year, with most seminars being conducted in host countries overseas. They are one of the most active of the OSD combating terrorism programs.